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CCHR reiterates independence from all political parties, and firm commitment to human rights principles

Following comments made by Prime Minister Hun Sen on 26 November 2017, in which he ordered the Ministry of Interior (“MoI”) to investigate and shut down the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (“CCHR”), CCHR wishes to restate its steadfast independence from all political parties, and its firm commitment to promote human rights in a principled manner.

Since it foundation in 2002, CCHR has undertaken vital work to promote and protect the values and rights which are enshrined in Cambodia’s Constitution and international human rights treaties which Cambodia has voluntarily ratified. CCHR works on a wide variety of human rights issues, varying from human rights education, to the empowerment of rural communities affected by land conflicts, and the promotion of LGBTIQ equality. It has assisted countless victims of human rights violations in their pursuit of justice by providing free legal aid and related support. These activities directly and significantly contribute to Cambodia’s sustainable development.

Mr. Kem Sokha, the currently detained leader of the recently-dissolved Cambodia National Rescue Party (“CNRP”) founded CCHR in 2002 and later resigned in 2007, before founding the Human Rights Party (“HRP”). CCHR has been through two changes in leadership since the resignation of Kem Sokha.

CCHR wishes to re-affirm its absolute non-partisanship and independence from all political parties. Strict independence is a core value of CCHR, which strives to provide a balanced and principled human rights analysis of public affairs, without favoring any party. In fact, CCHR is one of the very few groups in Cambodia which has faced backlash from both the ruling party and the opposition as a result of its principled criticism of their policies, actions or rhetoric.

A small number of CCHR’s former staff members have entered politics or joined various political parties, including both the opposition CNRP and the ruling Cambodian People’s Party (“CPP”). Although CCHR supports the right of every individual to enter politics, CCHR is not influenced in any way by former staff members who have entered politics.

CCHR firmly believes that any independent and impartial investigation into CCHR would find no wrongdoing whatsoever on the part of the organization. CCHR calls upon the Royal Government of Cambodia to enter into a meaningful dialogue with CCHR representatives in relation to these allegations, in the firm belief that any misperceptions about the nature of CCHR’s work and neutrality could be clarified, and the matter resolved.

CCHR plans to continue the pursuit of its core mission of promoting respect for human rights in Cambodia, on the basis of its core institutional values of independence, transparency, equality and non-discrimination.
For more information, please contact CCHR Executive Director Chak Sopheap via telephone at +855 11 943 213 or e-mail at chaksopheap@cchrcambodia.org.

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Notes to the Editor:

CCHR, founded in November 2002, is a non-aligned, independent, non-governmental organization that works to promote and protect democracy and respect for human rights throughout Cambodia.

CCHR is a member of International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), the global network for freedom of expression. CCHR is also a member of the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT), OECD-Watch, the SOS-Torture Network and the Southeast Asian Press Alliance (SEAPA).

The Cambodian Human Rights Portal www.sithi.org is the 2011 winner of the Information Society Innovation Fund Award in the category of Rights and Freedoms and the 2013 winner of the Communication for Social Change Award, awarded by the Centre of Communication and Social Change at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia.